

REMARKS

This Amendment responds to the Final Office Action mailed September 12, 2006. Claims 1-36 were pending. Claims 1, 35 and 36 are amended and claims 25 and 26 are cancelled without prejudice or disclaimer. Thus, claims 1-24 and 27-36 are now pending in the application for reconsideration.

Applicants thank the Examiner for indicating that claim 26 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form. Applicants also thank the Examiner for the courtesy of conducting a telephone interview on September 28, 2006 during which the present amendments were discussed.

Summary of the Office Action

In the Office Action, claims 1-4, 14-17, 21-23, 27-32, 35, and 36 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 5,891,095 to Eggers et al. ("Eggers"), claims 5-13 and 34 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Eggers in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,106,519 to Long et al. ("Long"), claims 18-20 and 25 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Eggers in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,413,255 to Stern ("Stern"), and claims 24 and 33 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Eggers in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,228,081 to Goble et al. ("Goble"). Additionally, the Office Action states that claim 26 is objected to in the Office Action as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitation of the base claim and any intervening claim.

Response to all Rejections

In order to expedite allowance of the present application, claim 1 is amended to incorporate all of the limitations from claim 26 which is cancelled. This amendment to claim 1 effectively rewrites claim 26 in independent form including all limitations of the base claim as suggested in the Office Action. Claims 25 and 26 are cancelled without prejudice or disclaimer. Claims 35 and 36 are amended only to recite the proper

antecedent for elements now recited in amended claim 1. Applicants respectfully request that the amendments be entered since the amendments resolve the objection to claim 26 and thereby place all pending claims in condition for allowance without introducing new matter or limitations requiring further examination.

Since amended claim 1 encompasses the subject matter of claim 26 in independent form, Applicants request withdrawal of the rejection of claim 1. Since claims 2-24 and 27-36 depend, directly or indirectly, from amended claim 1, Applicants respectfully submit that these claims are also allowable for at least the same reasons as identified by the Examiner for claim 26. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request withdrawal of the rejections of claims 2-24 and 27-36.

Applicants respectfully maintain that the originally presented claims 1-25 and 27-31 are allowable at least for the reasons presented in Applicants' Reply dated July 28, 2006 to the non-final Office Action. Accordingly, Applicants reserve their right to pursue the subject matter of the original claims 1-25 and 27-36 in a continuation application.

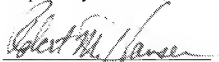
Conclusion

In view of the above amendments and remarks, Applicants respectfully request that all objections and rejections be withdrawn and that a notice of allowance be forthcoming. The Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned for any reason related to the advancement of this case.

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Hansen Huang Technology Law Group,
LLP
1725 I St., NW, Suite 300
Washington, D.C. 20006
Telephone: 202-465-3294
Facsimile: 202-349-3915

Respectfully submitted,



Robert M. Hansen
Attorney for Applicant
Reg. No.: 43,656

Customer No. 61275
E-mail: robert.hansen@H2TLG.com